

The Desert TO THE TRUE AMERICAN.

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VOL. I.

ON CANDOUR & LIBERALITY.

THERE is not a more fashionable topic of conversation than the praise of candour and liberality, and the condemnation of prejudice and detraction. My habitual attention to manners has frequently led me critically to examine the different meanings annexed to these terms by different persons. This examination has convinced me that they are used with significations totally opposite, and that many persons, if they were properly understood, would be found to patronise prejudice under the name of candour, and to stigmatise candour under the name of prejudice.

Candour may be defined a disposition of mind, which willingly allows to every argument, cause, and character, its real weight and importance. It ought to be remarked that it is wholly a disposition, and is by no means necessarily connected with genius or learning: but is found in every degree of abilities, both natural and acquired.

If this definition be just, nothing can be more remote from candour than the idea often affixed to the term; nor can any thing be correspondent with it than the conduct which is often censured as the height of prejudice.

Truth is of great inestimable importance; and error is not only worthless, but contemptible. Candour must, of course, esteem truth of the highest worth, and adhere to it with the utmost steadiness. A constant adherence to truth being therefore the necessary conduct of candour, indifference to truth is its immediate opposite. Virtue is of infinite value, dignity, and loveliness. According to these characteristics must it be viewed by candour; and every view of it, which varies from these characteristics, so far varies from the views of candour. In conformity with these remarks, the Being who is possessed of infinite candour, regards truth and virtue with infinite complacency. In his adherence to truth and virtue there is no variation or intermission, nor the least relaxation in his hatred of error and vice. Hence the strictest adherence to a good cause, and the firmest opposition to a bad one, is not only a conformity to the most perfect candour, but its necessary dictate.

Benevolus is a person of eminent knowledge and virtue. To his eye, truth is ornamented with charms wholly irresistible; and a virtuous action recommends its author to him more than the possession of a sceptre. His heart and hand are always open to the wants and the welfare of mankind; and even the worst of wretches, in real distress, will ever command his assistance. An argument fairly exhibited to him will be allowed its full weight; and, in spite of authority or multitude, an opinion supported by evi-

dence will receive his assent. Virtue, even in rags, instinctively engages his reverence: and I have often seen him pull off his hat, with a very complaisant bow, to an honest beggar. But he pays no respect to folly, nor allows it in any circumstances the title of wisdom. Of all men living, perhaps, he regards villany with the least complaisance, and the least indulgence. He neither dares nor wishes to say, let the opinions of those around be ever so different from his own, that among various sentiments he thinks there is no preference. As he knows that practices are wholly the result of principles, that truth is the natural parent of virtue, and error of vice, no temptation could induce him to express an indifference concerning subjects of such mighty importance. To the force of argument, could it be produced, he would yield up his philosophy, his politics, or even his religion; but to fashionable opinion, or the mere names of great men, he would not concede the difference between *tweedle-dum* and *tweedle-dee*. He would cheerfully spend a day, or even a week, in persuading a person whom he esteemed erroneous, that his principles were mistaken, and that others were just; and, should all his endeavours fail of success, he would still treat his antagonist with entire civility, and render him every office of good will. The reputed improbability or the disreputable novelty of an opinion has no influence on his scrutinies or his belief; and could but reasonable evidence be offered, he would recede from every opinion he had ever adopted.

Gallio is frequently present at debates on the interesting subjects of politics and religion, many of which are managed with reason and propriety; but he is never known to fail of winding up the conversation with a self-approving thrug of security, and declaration that he is of neither side. If you ask him his opinion, concerning two parties, however respectable the one, and however unworthy the other, he uniformly expresses it in that contemptible refuge of indolence and insensibility—There is blame on both sides. Choose him an arbitrator of disputes between you and your neighbour, and he will invariably split the difference. In a company of Christians strenuously asserting the evidence of revelation, he will observe that it is very difficult to answer their arguments; in a circle of infidels strenuously opposing it, he will remark—there is, doubtless, much weight in what has been advanced. With Calvinists he passes for a Calvinist, and with Arminians for an Arminian—without assenting to either sect, or approving the opinions of either. With whigs he is, in their opinion, a whig; and with tories a tory; but is neither a tory nor whig, nor did he ever declare himself of either party. If he hears his best friend stigmatised as a scoundrel, he observes—"All men have

their failings." Gallio is neither the friend nor the enemy of any man, party or cause. All persons of unworthy characters, engaged in disreputable parties for holding opinions incapable of being supported, are pleased with Gallio; for he never censures their characters, opinions, or purposes; but make such observations as look like approbation, and leaves them pleased with themselves, and of consequence pleased with him. With the world at large he is a man of good-nature, and with the persons just mentioned as a man of uncommon liberality.

As I am perfectly acquainted with both these persons, it is with no small mortification that I hear Benevolus frequently characterised as a man of prejudice, rigidity, and illiberality; and candour, liberality, catholicism, as frequently attributed to Gallio. As I wish my countrymen to adopt just and defensible opinions, I cannot but be chagrined to see the love of truth and virtue, the most illustrious trait of an intelligent character, esteemed prejudice and illiberality or to see a total indifference to every thing valuable or despicable mistaken for candour. It is true, such an indifference give no unwarrantable preference to one subject above another; for it gives no preference of any kind. But to feel as friendly to vice as to virtue, to error as to truth, to love an honest man no more than a knave, view the happiness of millions hanging in dreadful suspense with phlegmatic insensibility, is prejudice of a most unworthy and contemptible nature.

Like all other prejudices, this leads the mind to an uniform train of erroneous opinions. Among others, none can be of greater magnitude than those I have mentioned. To think lightly of truth and virtue, or to be insensible to the infinite preference of virtue to vice, of truth to error, and of right to wrong, is to entertain as false and as fatal opinions as can be devised.

There are innumerable persons who partially wear the character of Gallio. Scelestus never speaks respectfully of virtue, nor contemptuously of vice, because either conduct would lead the company around him to make application to himself, and because he is unwilling to become his own satirist, or the panegyrist of those who are most unlike him. Yet Scelestus is on every occasion a decided patroniser of public spirit; for he thinks his own political life has been esteemed consistent with his declarations. Egon is totally silent at the mention of all virtuous conduct, except the payment of debts. Egon, being rich, finds the payment of debts easy and advantageous to his interests, and is clamorous in its commendation. Arrius warmly panegyrises the character of a good friend. Arrius fought for Caligula, to whom he had professed friendship, although he knew the villain was justly chastised for the grossest injury to the family of his benefactor.

In the next debauch, Caligula attempted the virtue of Arrius's sister; but Arrius was too good a friend to resent such a trifle.

All these pangs for persons of great candour with every class of mankind who would be wounded by the reproofs of honesty. Every man who knows himself to be in this situation—who meanly shrinks from the searching eye of virtue—who trembles at the approach of discovery—who is conscious that his opinions and practices will not bear examination—who feels himself shaded by the neighbourhood of piety—and who takes the alarm at the promulgation of tenets dangerous to guilt—will be highly pleased to find those who are in some degree respectable manifest even an indifference to his follies and vices, and to escape with a laugh of ironical approbation, where he shivered at the stings and scourges of truth.—To all who grant this indulgence to his particular failings, he pays a tribute of good names. His applause, indeed, is by no means the effect of gratitude; for it is designed ultimately for himself. While he celebrates the candour of his favours, he means to insinuate that all others, if influenced by candour, would treat his conduct with the same tenderness, and speak of his character with similar respect.

To men of just enquiry, and enlarged sentiment, all the instances above mentioned will appear to be the effect of gross prejudice and criminal insensibility. In the eye of such men, he alone will deserve the honourable epithets of candid and impartial, who is the real fixed friend of all those interests which the harmonizing dictates of common sense and revelation have represented as valuable. Such persons it is true, are liable to error; otherwise they would cease to be men; but when they are exposed to a few trivial mistakes, the sceptic and the voluptuary will be lost in a wilderness of falsehood. This disposition is indeed the great, the only guide to truth and rectitude; and he who is unpossessed of it, when fairly unveiled, will ever appear alike contemptible for his disposition and his opinions.

C.

ANECDOTE.

TWO LAWYERS, one day, in riding the road came up with a CLERGYMAN—Says one of them to his fellow traveller, we'll crack a joke upon the Priest.—Pleased with the idea of their sport, they rode up, one on either side; after mutual salutations, one of them says, "how happens it daddy, that gentlemen of your cloth make such egregious blunders in the pulpit. I heard a brother of your's the other day, when he wished to say Og king of Bashan, say Hog king of Bacon." Oh, replied the divine, "we are men of like infirmities with the rest of our fellow-creatures; I lately when I should have said the Devil is the father of lyars—said the Devil is the father of lawyers." Ah, replied the other, "which are you a knave or a fool?" "I believe, Gentlemen," returned he "I am BETWEEN BOTH."

A MORAL LESSON.

ABOU TAIB, emperor of India, ascended the throne of his fathers, amid the acclamations of his people, and blessed with all that nature or fortune could bestow to confer happiness. His seraglio was filled with the greatest beauties of the East, his table constantly furnished with a round of the most luxurious dainties, and nothing which sense can desire, or capricious fancy invent, was denied to Abou Taib.

One day as he walked in his palace, reflecting on his power, his wealth, and the various means of pleasure he possessed; a messenger arrived to inform him that one of the principal nobles of his court was suddenly dead. This melancholy and unexpected event, entirely occupied his thoughts. Alas! said he, what is every thing that ambition can attain, or wealth procure; one end happeneth to all, and death, which concludes the woes of the beggar, shall one day terminate the power and splendor of the emperor of Indostan. Were life eternally to endure, what I enjoy were indeed much to be prized; but of what value are riches, pleasure, or power, while the loss of them is thus certain.

At the same moment, a burst of thunder shook the palace to the foundations and the genius Abaddon stood before the monarch.

Repining mortal, said the ethereal vision, I have heard thy murmurs, and that thou mayest no longer have reason for such complaints, take this talisman, and at the end of any day hereafter, which thou hast spent in pleasures and delight, apply it to thy forehead, forming a wish that the next may be perfectly like it; and thou shalt find each following one exactly the same, in every event and enjoyment, nor shall they cloy by repetition; thou shalt be new to the pleasures of each successive day, as if the preceding had never been. The day thou wilt fix on is left to thy choice, only be careful how thou usest my gift, and chuse that, the delights of which thou wouldst perpetuate with prudence; for having once employed the charm, thou wilt have no power to reverse it, but wilt be necessitated continually to repeat the felicity first chosen; so saying, the genius disappeared.

Abou Taib received the talisman with inexpressible joy, believing that now an immortality of pleasure was in his power, and not doubting but he should soon be able to fix on the day of which the constant return should produce a never ceasing round of perfect happiness.

But this was not so easy as he had at first supposed. Every evening when he came to reflect on the circle of hours that just had fled, he constantly found something too unsatisfactory in the pleasures they had presented for him to expect much delight from their repetition. Hope continually allured him on to look forwards to some happier moments, which might better deserve perpetuation. This felicity however was continually expected but never arrived. Every successive day pleased him still less than the past.

In the mean time, age crept upon Abou Taib. Those enjoyments which he had found so imperfect in the fervor of youth, appeared still less satisfactory in his declining years. Yet, strange insatiation of the secret Hope! his chimeri-

cal expectations of greater happiness to come, daily increased.

At last, while fancy was amusing him with scenes of future, and for ever recurring bliss, an acute disorder seized upon Abou Taib. His gaiety, his vigor, and every capacity of enjoying pleasure fled before it, nor was it long ere the most experienced of his physicians pronounced he had not six hours to live. Shocked at the hasty approach of the angel of death, and resolved to avail himself of his talisman; he applied the gift of the genius from which he had promised himself never-ending pleasure, to perpetuate extreme and eternal anguish!

His misery soon made him desirous to invite that death he had been so solicitous to shun, but the fatal charm was not to be reversed. Day after day he started from the same dreadful dreams, to suffer the same round of sickness, pain and torture.

The genius at length pitying his condition, and moved by his prayers, appeared again before him. Man of many follies, cried he, murmur no more at the decrees of heaven; repine not at the flight of pleasures you have not thought worth repeating. Wherefore should you blame the shortness of a life in which you have been so unwilling to partake, even your high it enjoyments? Whatever applies to every part, must apply to the whole; and what is true of every day of our lives, must be true of life in general. What then, in praying for its continuance, do you wish to be continued? The flattering dreams of imagination, and the fallacious promises of hope never completely fulfilled; but repeatedly, nay almost always utterly falsified. Let those who hear your story learn by your example, to remain contented with the condition providence has allotted them; and remember that even the end of their imperfect happiness, is to be considered as an addition to the little felicity they enjoy.

The genius ended, and the angel of death, to him the angel of bliss, closed the eyes of Abou Taib.

ANECDOTE.

On the recommendation of Sir Boyle Roche, a native friend of his, who lost one of his eyes in a hurdling match, lately applied to an oculist to have it replaced by a glass eye. The oculist produced one, the colour and brilliancy of which was greatly admired by Sir Boyle and the other native, who agreed to purchase it for ten pound.

No sooner, however, was the glass orb inserted in the socket, than the native began to storm, swearing that it was all a cheat, for he could see no better than before.

Sir Boyle demanded in a great passion, how he could be such an impostor as to sell a man an eye with which he could not see.

The oculist, though surprized at so strange an enquiry, had the shrewdness to answer, that it was unreasonable to think that such an effect could be produced in a moment, but there was no doubt of his seeing very well with it in time.

This explanation satisfied the parties for the moment, and the glass eye now remains in a state of probation. The native expresses some doubts, but—"seeing is believing."

The Dessert

SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 1799.

FOR THE DESSERT.

SPECTATOR, No. 2.

THE power of the late Mr. WHITEFIELD'S elocution, is the only instance I shall adduce, of the many generally known, in proof of the justice of my observations in the first number, respecting the influence of *manner* in public speaking. Few of the present generation who have heard of Mr. WHITEFIELD, are ignorant, that upon giving notice of his design to meet his auditory at four o'clock in the morning, the house would often be filling during the preceding night, and at the early hour appointed, would be so crowded, as to render his passage to the desk extremely difficult. To decide how far his elocution is to be credited, for this extraordinary power of attraction, it is but necessary to look into those of his sermons which are in print. There we find his opinions, his arguments, his style, and in short, every principle of his oratory, except the elocution. Are his opinions more rational or orthodox? Are his arguments more intelligible or powerful? Is his style purer or more elegant, than are displayed in the writings of other divines of that or the present day? I have frequently heard comparisons made between them, and never once met an idea that his opinions, arguments, or style, claimed any pre-eminence. Whence then the superior attraction of his discourses, but in the alluring, the enchanting *manner* in which they were delivered? And is it not to be lamented, that this essential principle in education, should depend on the address of a school-mistress? and that her only opportunity for teaching an important science, which she has never been taught is between the periods of three and seven years of age?

Left I should appear to be trifling with my subject, I shall trace up the stages of education through which our American orators generally advance, and state some positions, which have the sanction of experience. The only principle on which the elements of elocution can properly be founded is just reading. A child is kept at reading English, during his continuance at a

woman's school; he is thence removed to a Latin school; his studies here are turned to the dead languages, from which he rarely descends to the reading of his own;—and at college, which is his next station, it would be a degradation to sink him from the regions where *Homer* and *Virgil* soar, down to the petty concerns of reading with propriety that language in which he must speak to his groom and his laundress. It is true that what belongs to *style* in composition, is advantageously taught at college, and that Blair's and other lectures on Rhetoric are read by the students, and that those lectures contain directions for manner in delivery;—but, it is equally true, that no directions which ever appeared on paper, or ever can, are competent to forming a just, natural and pleasing elocution. The variety in this enchanting art is so great, that it may justly be stiled infinite; the gradations of *time of tune*, are so minute, that the scale of music cannot measure them. An accurate description of the human features, with all their uses and powers, would fall short of teaching the language of *countenance*. The whole skill of anatomy united, in particularizing every effect of each muscle of the body, would be inadequate for displaying *gesture*. How then can *books* teach elocution? The book of *nature* is the only volume which can successfully be studied for the purpose. One month spent in reading a child five years old, shall give more useful information, than the whole academic period, spent in the college library. Let nature then be the guide in this charming art, for whatever is justly copied from nature, will charm. In my next number I shall endeavour to point out such measures, as, if pursued, would be productive of the purpose sought, and would effectually relieve the orators of the succeeding generation from being ranked with that painter, who found it necessary to write under the unnatural figure he had drawn "*This is a Bear*."

ERRATA.

In Spectator No. 1, published in last Saturday's Dessert, the reader is requested to correct the following errors.

Column 1 line 5, for *manners* read *manner*. line 12, for *instructions* read *instruction*. line 30, for *least studied* read *least studied*. Col. 2, line 11, for *believed* read *believed*. line 12 from the bottom, for *sentiments* read *sentiment*. line 11 from the bottom, for *as* read *is*. line 3 from the bottom, for *evening* read *winning*. Col. 3, line 22, for *base* read *bas*.

—THE MORALIST—

THE sole preservative of popular morality, is religion. Whenever the vulgar are taught to scorn her restraints, they soon despise those of virtue. Vice rushes in like an impetuous torrent, which has overwhelmed its bounds, and carried all before it. The dim-sighted multitude are unable to perceive the nice discriminations between real and apparent interest. Religion held forth a faithful glass, to aid their imperfect sense: infidelity dashes this to earth, and in its stead presents the rabble with a delusive mirror, which magnifies contiguous objects, and shews them in alluring colours; whilst it imbibes the rays which would delineate the back ground.

Piety is the only sure foundation of moral conduct. What ingenuous motives could affect that mind, which is regardless of its obligations to infinite beneficence?—Sophists may argue and refine as they will, but there can be no genuine virtue, independent of true piety.

We daily see proofs of the inefficacy of speculative opinions, to regulate the actions of men. The understanding often assents to truths which never reach the heart. A feeling and habitual sense of Deity—a love of those divine precepts—a belief of those sublime doctrines—a hope of those eternal rewards he hath revealed, will be found absolutely necessary to counterbalance the suddenness of temptation, the force of example, and the constant solicitations to criminal indulgence.

ANECDOTE.

The late Mr. Charles Yorke being returned a member for the university of Cambridge, he went round the Senate to thank those who had voted for him, and said to one of them, noted for having the largest and most hideous ugly face almost ever seen, "Sir I have great reason to be thankful to my friends in general, and confess myself under a particular obligation to you for the very remarkable countenance you have shewn me on this occasion."

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VERSIFICATION

OF THE SORROWS OF LATHMAR.

[A Fragment of Ancient Poetry.]

THE blast on the plain had decreast,
And darkness encompass'd the globe,
The lark had retir'd to her nest,
And the swain to his humble abode.

When on Strumen's beautiful shore,
Sat LATHMAR, in sorrow reclin'd;
His countenance, (blossoming before)
Declared the pains of his mind.

As under the willow he sat,
His sorrowful tale thus he told,
In accents, both plaintive and sweet,
While Strumen in silence did roll,

"Nerina, my love, thou wert fair!
More sweet than the roses in bloom!
The tresses of thy yellow hair
Resembled the sun-beams at noon!"

"Thy heart was all mildness and love,
Thy looks were all placid and kind,
How soothing thy tenderness prov'd
When on thy fair breast I reclin'd."

"The morning was charming and still—
Nerina in transport exclaimed:
Let us rouse up the deer of the hills,
And enjoy the sweet chase on the plain!"

"Thro' forests we bended our way,
We flew with the swiftness of wind;
We soon came in sight of our prey,
Attending his favourite hind."

"Nerina her arrow discharg'd,
Which wounded the son of the wood;
From the thicket the monster immerg'd,
And rush'd to the place where she stood."

"With trembling I founded my bow,
The arrow glanc'd by from his horn;
That arrow my charmer laid low,
And left me to sorrow and mourn."

"O LATHMAR! renown'd is my end,
(She cried with transports so sweet;)

What honour to die by thy hand!"

What joy to expire at thy feet!"

"O youth of my soul! we must part;
But soon shall our joys be renew'd
Where love shall illumine the fond heart,
Where sorrow no more shall intrude."

"The birds shall remember our loves,
Our story their sons shall declare,
The nymphs as they ramble the groves
Shall over our tomb drop a tear."

"She fell, like the flow'r of the vale,
Before the cold blast of the north;
Her eyes soon grew livid and pale,
On my bosom her spirit fled forth."

"The valley shall witness my moan,
There sleeps my Nerina's cold clay,
There will I retire all alone,
And utter my sorrowful lay."

THE BEGGAR GIRL.

MARIA was Misfortune's child,
Report to spread her fate;
With trembling heart and manners mild,
She'd wander 'till 'twas late.

Her form was beautiful, although poor;
Stranger to cap or feather;
Barefoot she'd trudge from door to door;
Distress'd was this fair beggar.

Deserted, friendless and forgot,
Was this sad victim's case:
Alas, pale misery was the lot
Of that once blooming face!

Winter's dreary scenes drew nigh,
Unpitied—by her foes—
Maria droop'd, and heav'd a sigh;
Thus ended all her woes.

* It was held by the ancient Highlanders to be highly conducive of their future happiness to die by the hand of some person worthy or renowned.

ON EPISTOLARY WRITING.

AS epistolary writing is certainly one of the most pleasing and elegant amusements in life, (especially to youth, to whom a moderate exercise of the mental faculties is of the highest importance) any hint that can be suggested, that may in any degree contribute to facilitate the improvement of this innocent and polite amusement, should be received with candour:

and if when reduced to practice, it should prove salutary in its effects, one step farther would be attained towards a proficiency in this delightful employment of the human faculties.

I have heard many persons, and those too of tolerable good sense, profess an utter aversion to letter-writing, declaring it to be disagreeable and irksome to the mind.

Many of these persons have, from an unpardonable inattention to the letters of their friends, incurred the displeasure of persons who were possessed both of the power and the will to promote their interest, and place them in eligible situations in life. Young persons of this indolent turn of mind have experienced, when too late, that a very small degree of attention, seasonably applied, would have been the means of conciliating the affections of those who were always partial to them from the ties of consanguinity, or perhaps attached to them from whim or caprice.

From whatever motive we have been so fortunate as to engage the affections, it is certain they may either be conciliated by kindness and attention or totally alienated by inattention and neglect.

Young people (who, in general, are too vain of their personal accomplishments) seem to imagine that such attractions as they possess must counterbalance all mental deficiencies, and cannot fail of procuring universal esteem and admiration; not considering that amiableness of manners, and sweetness of temper, will outweigh, in the estimation of the discerning and judicious, all superficial acquisitions, and pretty accomplishments.

The greatest error among acquaintances, that I know of, is that they suffer the letters of their friend to remain so long unanswered, that eventually lose all relish to answer them at all. They make many resolves that they will set about writing ere long; but something intervenes that banishes the idea from their minds. Perhaps, some time after, the thought again recurs; but as the impression made by the sentiment of their friend's letter grows weaker, it has not energy sufficient to incite to the task. They then grow indifferent about the matter, and set themselves at rest by the consideration that the time elapsed is unpardonable, and therefore unnecessary to write at all. In the end, probably, the impulse will be so strong, that he is determined to set about the business in good earnest: sits down in a bustle—begins by making a number of unmeaning, and generally false, apologies, for his negligence—and pens a languid, fulsome, unanimated epistle, which (as the case generally terminates) seemingly contributes to confirm his friend that he has been injudicious in the choice of a confidant, who is incapable of answering the obligations of friendship.

Every man who is acquainted with the human mind must know that all impressions upon the senses are weakened by the lapse of time.—Resolve, therefore, in future, whenever you receive a letter replete with sentiments congenial with your own, or that call forth all the tender feelings—then, while the heart is warmed with enthusiasm, or softened with sympathy, pour forth the involuntary effusions of nature without restraint.

OWEN.